

RELIGION

with the right people. Yet, despite the most heroic efforts on his part to attain these ends, he was continually being thwarted by his poverty and by the dull-minded complacency of his guardians.

Peter is not the only interesting character. There are his uncle, driven to a mental asylum by disease, drink, and the loss of his vibrant mistress; Franz and Poldi, his cousins, with their divergent personalities; his aunt and many others to weave their tragic ways through the crowded pages and contribute to the lasting quality of the book. (PETER DOMANIC. By Victor White. Bobbs-Merrill, 704 pages. \$3.)

Other New Books

THE BRITISH COMMONWEALTH. By Sir Edward Grigg, M.P. 269 pages. Live-right. \$2.75. A semi-official answer to questions about Britain's foreign policy and her plans for the future by the one time private secretary to Lloyd George, former governor of Kenya, and now member of the House of Commons.

THE LAND DIVIDED. By Gerstle Mack. 684 pages. Knopf. \$6. A history of the four periods of the Panama Canal's development—the Spanish era, the rival canal and railway projects of the nineteenth century, the French failure, and the final opening under American direction. An important and worth-while book.

Methodists at War

The largest Protestant denomination in America went into its second quadrennial General Conference a fortnight ago with some misgivings. It had been five years since three churches similar in theology had united in one of the most important religious mergers yet.* Inevitably the move had brought new inner tensions which now rumbled ominously below a surface of harmony. True, they were not yet serious threats, but to many a timid Methodist, unity was too young to withstand the violent disagreement an open convention brings.

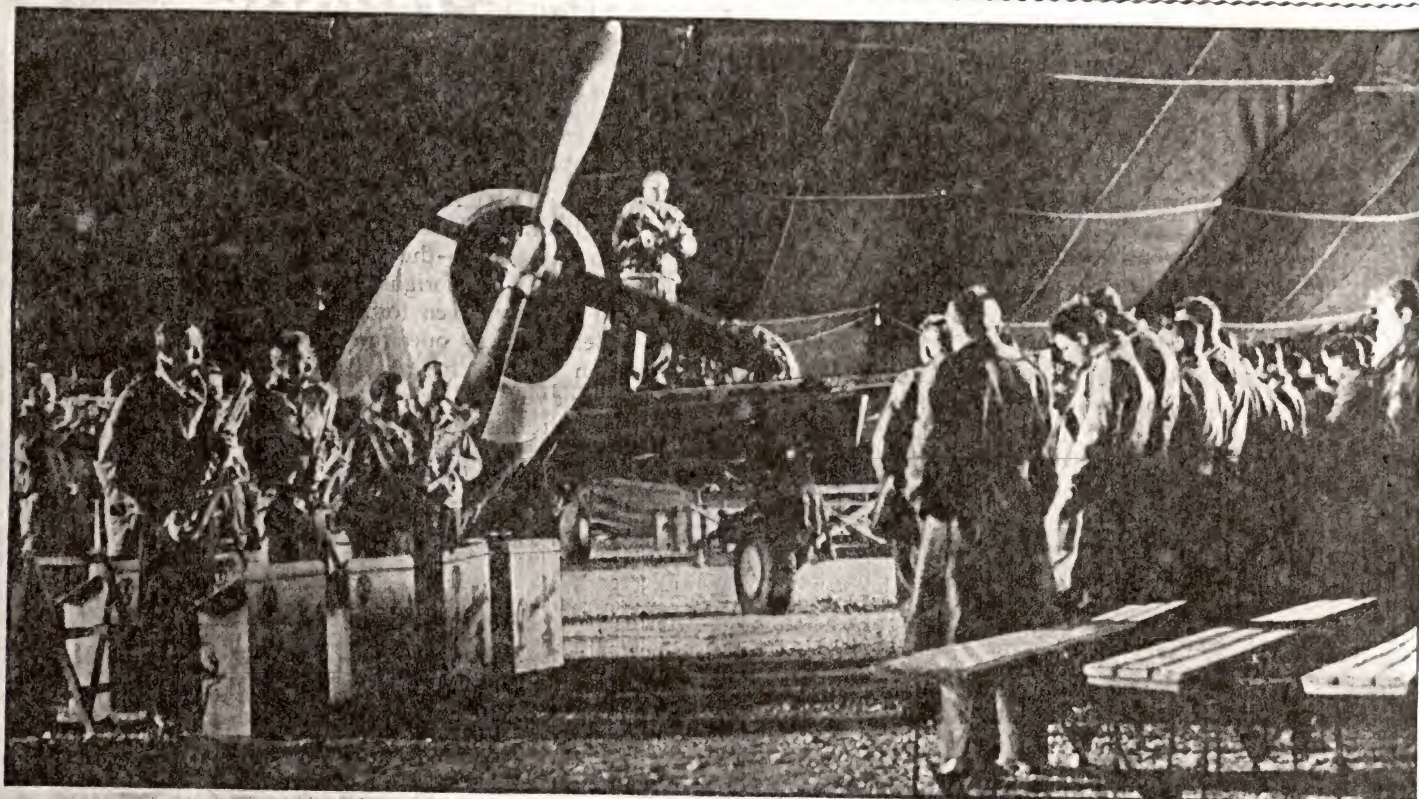
Last week the 726 delegates from 101 conferences in the United States and 44 abroad finished their lawmaking session with a debate on a subject highly explosive among Methodists—the part their church should play in the war. The fight had begun in 1940 when the first General Conference adopted a "Statement on Peace and War." Unequivocally it had held that Methodists "will not officially endorse, support, or participate in war." Tension, already great, almost reached the breaking point with the recent publication of "Massacre by Bombing" (NEWS-

*In 1939 the Methodist Episcopal Church, the Methodist Protestant Church, and the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, became simply the Methodist Church. Total membership is nearly 8,000,000.

WEEK, March 20). Six of the 28 signers of this plea for an end to Allied raids on enemy cities were Methodist clergymen.

Hence what many Methodists feared from this year's conference was an absolute stalemate. Specifically at issue were two reports from the Committee on the State of the Church: (1) the majority, calling for a compromise by modifying the 1940 stand enough to permit individual decision on war participation, and (2) the minority, demanding outright war endorsement. In the most heated debate of the meeting, the majority's chief argument was that the church should not bless the war, but the opposition was far more vigorous and imaginative:

The Cross, Too: Charles C. Parlin, lawyer and lay delegate from Englewood, N. J., introduced the minority report by labeling the majority's as "pacifistic," a document which offered "nothing to our brethren in China but to lay down their arms and surrender to the Japanese." Moreover, it failed to call upon the church for a "prayer for victory." Quickly Charles A. Jones, Columbus, Ohio, publisher, agreed: Those who talk about the war being a dirty business, he said, should remember that "the cross was dirty, too, but it showed the way to the redemption of the world." And the Rev. Nolan B. Harmon of New York charged the church with spending "more time on the 600 Methodists who are conscientious



Hangar Hymn: From the wing of a Thunderbolt, Chaplain Solon L. Cole of Beaumont, Texas, led members of the Ninth Air Force Service Command in a hymn one Sunday recently. Inside the huge tent hangar at one of the air force

bases somewhere in England, music was provided by the Gremlins, a soldier band. Chaplain Cole told the men that "any place where men worship can be a church . . . men do not need a cathedral to worship God."

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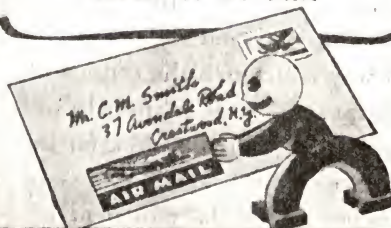
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objectors than on thrice that many cross-over Methodists" who have been killed in the war.

Such talk proved so persuasive that the conference completely reversed its 1914 stand. By a vote of 373 to 300, the church adopted the minority report, which said in part: "God Himself has a stake in the struggle . . . While we respect the individual conscience of those who believe they cannot condone the use of force and staunchly will defend them on this issue, we cannot accept their position as the defining position of the Christian church."

Other actions of the conference:

☐ With far less opposition, the delegates agreed on postwar treatment of our enemies. They adopted a report calling for "safeguards and controls but not oppression" of Germany and Japan, who should be included in a world society of nations as soon as it was feasible. "As Christians," the report said, "we urge [the terms] be just, constructive, and not retributive." It added that the terms for Japan should be more severe than those for Germany. It further urged United States participation in an international peace organization.

☐ By a vote of approximately 2 to 1, the conference turned down a proposal to give women full rights as ministers in the church. (The Methodists have permitted ordination of women as local preachers but they cannot be assigned by the conferences.) The chief reason: If parishes did accept women—and few would—there would not be enough jobs for returning war chaplains.

☐ A worldwide "Crusade for Christ" was started with a \$25,000,000 program for "projecting the influence of Christianity over the boundary lines of all nations." It will do this by certain "concrete measures" such as rebuilding church properties and rehabilitating people in war areas, conducting a churchwide evangelistic campaign, and driving for an increase in Sunday-school enrollment. Of the special fund (which must be raised) \$14,500,000 will go to foreign missions, \$9,000,000 for home missions, and the rest to the World Council of Churches, the American Bible Society and other such groups.

'Discrimination'

The heads of 23 denominations representing 25,000,000 Protestants made public their case against Selective Service this week. Angriest they had protested the recent cancellation of deferments for all pre-theological students (about 1,750) as "discrimination"—it would "wholly cut off the supply" of Protestant ministers while the Roman Catholic priesthood would be unaffected. While Protestant students receive secular pre-theological training, Catholic aspirants attend church-operated schools, obtain the status of divinity student before entering a seminary, and as a result are draft exempt.